



Steven Sparrow & the Shade of a Great Tree

by Matthew Dale Jones



Children - Animals

191 Pages

Reviewed on 04/02/2025

Book Review

Reviewed by Afifa Raisa for Readers' Favorite

Steven Sparrow & the Shade of a Great Tree by Matthew Dale Jones tells the story of Steven, a stubborn young bird dealing with the consequences of choosing an unconventional path. On Flying Day, Steven tells his family about his decision to walk instead of fly. The choice is impulsive, but he is determined to stick to his word and be the first walking sparrow. As he leaves the nest on foot, he realizes that the journey will be far from easy. He is partly relieved when he befriends Mouse, a goodhearted creature who shelters Steven, saving him from potential predators and perils. Their brotherhood deepens with time, and the unexpected challenges they come across open Steven's eyes to truths he has been too naive—or simply too stubborn—to acknowledge.

Matthew Dale Jones's Steven Sparrow & the Shade of a Great Tree is a thoughtful and enjoyable story that sheds light on diverse aspects of life and human nature through the thoughts, words, and actions of animals. It is a children's book, but themes including choices and consequences, truth, freedom, survival, and family make it relatable and meaningful to adult readers as well. Jones has done a great job with Mouse; this character shows how an honest and supportive companion can help one become a better individual. The style of narration is engaging to keep young readers hooked. This charming book is recommended for children aged nine to twelve, but adult fans of fables will also enjoy it.



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Author Biography



I've been teaching middle and high school for twenty-five years, which means I've watched THOUSANDS of young people navigate adolescence.

I've also, as a recovering adolescent myself, participated in many informal support groups of fellow post-adolescents that are still struggling to overcome the mistakes we made during that harrowing and hugely influential life period.

I wrote Steven Sparrow & the Shade of a Great Tree to explore how challenging this period can be, how the mistakes we all make during this time can cast a really long shadow, and how it's never too late to free ourselves of that shade and feel the warm sun on our head.

We all have a little Steven Sparrow in us, some more than others (yours truly included), and we can be stubborn, and we can be incredibly talented at crafting narratives that justify our shortcomings. Opening up to the truth, becoming honest with ourselves, and having the courage to fly no matter how old we are were themes I wanted to explore.

I also wanted to do it in a setting where I could get away with being a little cheeky, as well as a little dark, without (hopefully) going too far on either front. Who doesn't love talking woodland creatures?

I hope you enjoy!

Cheers,
Matthew Dale Jones